

# A STRONGER, MORE EFFICIENT AND SECURE EU VISA POLICY

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The Member States of the European Union are among the world's leading tourist destinations – in 2016 alone, 14 million Schengen visas were issued to travellers visiting the EU. The common EU visa policy makes travelling to the European Union for tourism or business purposes easier. This has a positive impact on the EU's economy and growth, people-to-people contacts and cultural exchanges.

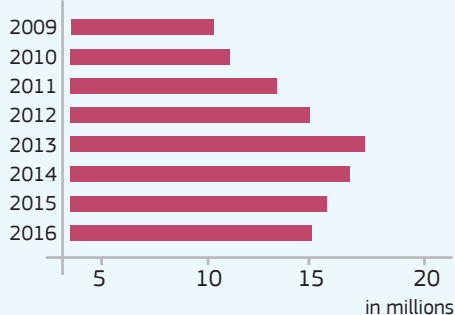
However, lengthy and cumbersome procedures can deter tourists from travelling to Europe, affecting the EU's economy negatively. In addition, increased security concerns, challenges linked to migration and new opportunities deriving from technological developments call for an update of the visa policy to make it fit for purpose and up-to-date - the current visa rules have remained unchanged since the EU Visa Code entered into force in 2010.



The Commission is therefore proposing to revise the common visa rules to better respond to new and emerging challenges that the EU is facing, while at the same time make it easier for legitimate travellers to visit the EU



## WHO NEEDS A VISA TO TRAVEL TO THE EU?

Currently, citizens from 105 non-EU countries or entities are required to hold a visa when travelling to the Schengen area for short stay visits.

Number of applications  
received for Schengen visas

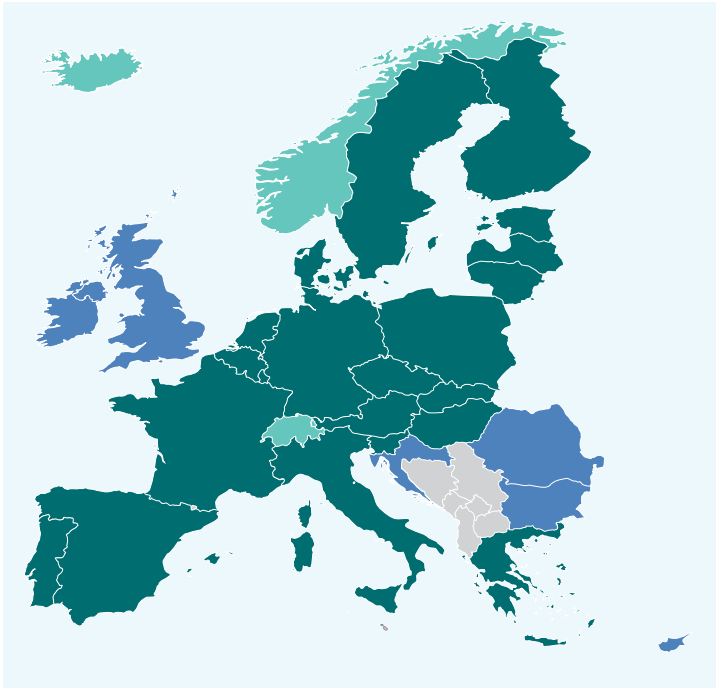


 Schengen Area  
 EU States and territories of EU States not part of Schengen

 Visa required  
 No visa required



## WHERE CAN TRAVELLERS GO WITH A SCHENGEN VISA?



A Schengen visa allows travellers to visit:

- ▶ the 26 countries of the Schengen area for tourism or business purposes;
- ▶ for a maximum duration of 90 days in any 180-day period.

The Schengen area consists of:

- EU Schengen States
- Non-EU Schengen States

Some EU States are not part of the Schengen area:

- EU States not part of Schengen

## HOW WILL THE NEW RULES MAKE THE EU VISA POLICY MORE EFFICIENT AND SECURE?



### SIMPLIFIED VISA APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Travellers will benefit from easier, more flexible, and faster procedures through:

- **Better advance planning:** Travellers will be able to submit their visa applications up to six months ahead of the planned trip, instead of the current three months.
- **Electronic application forms:** Applicants will have the possibility to fill in and sign the application form electronically.
- **Quicker decisions:** The deadline for taking decisions on visa applications will be reduced from 15 to 10 days.

### FACILITATING SHORT-TERM TOURISM



The new rules will provide for the possibility to introduce temporary schemes for the issuance of single-entry visas directly at the external land or sea borders – valid for a maximum of 7 days for visits to the issuing Member State only.

Introduced under strict conditions so as to minimise any potential irregular migration or security risks, such schemes would contribute to promoting short-term tourism and benefit the EU's economy.

### EASIER TRAVELLING FOR FREQUENT VISITORS

Regular travellers with positive visa histories will no longer have to apply for a new visa every time they travel to the EU. The new rules will ensure that travellers with a positive visa history applying for subsequent visas can benefit from:

- Multiple-entry visas allowing for repeated visits to the EU.
- Clearer rules regarding the period of validity of multiple-entry visas, starting from 1 year up to a maximum of 5 years.

Issuing more multiple-entry visas will lead to time and cost savings for both travellers and consulates, and will increase the competitiveness of the EU travel and tourism industry by facilitating spontaneous travel to the EU. Travellers' fulfilment of entry conditions will be thoroughly and repeatedly verified in all cases.



## REINFORCING THE SECURITY OF THE VISA PROCEDURE



The cost of applying for a Schengen visa – currently €60 has remained unchanged since 2006. A moderate increase of the fee to €80 is proposed to ensure that Member States have sufficient financial resources to:

- Maintain a wide consular coverage worldwide;
- Upgrade IT equipment and software and provide faster and user friendly procedures for visa applicants;
- Improve the capacity to detect potential security and irregular migration risks during the visa application procedures, including by reinforcing consular staff to speed up the application process.

This will also bring the fee in line with the level it would have reached based on the general EU-wide inflation rate since 2006. By international standards, the fee will remain comparatively low, with equivalent visa applications costing for example €125 for China, €133 for the United States, €100 for New Zealand and €90 for India.

## IMPROVING COOPERATION ON RETURN AND READMISSION

Whilst the visa reform aims to facilitate travel for legitimate travellers, the new rules will also better address challenges linked to irregular migration. The European Union has engaged with countries of origin to improve cooperation on return and readmission, but EU Member States are still experiencing difficulties in returning irregular migrants.

Once the new visa rules are in place, stricter conditions (for example on processing time, visa fees, the issuance of multiple-entry visas or the supporting documents required) may be established for processing visa applications for certain categories of nationals from countries who do not cooperate satisfactorily on return and readmission. A more restrictive application of the visa rules would not call into question the right to submit an application for a visa or to be granted a visa.

